

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING GAMES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY

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Abstract:

Vocabulary is a fundamental component and crucial aspect of learning any language. Without it, children or anyone else would struggle to grasp or comprehend what others are saying. However, one challenge in memorizing vocabulary is the lack of an engaging environment and traditional, often monotonous, memorization techniques. One way to make learning vocabulary more enjoyable is by incorporating games into the process. This article tries to summarize what kind of games can be used to create effective vocabulary learning and how to use it.

Key words: Learning, vocabulary methods, games, activities, flashcards

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According to Ersoz (2000), “language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating. Constant effort is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target language. Carefully selected games are extremely beneficial because they provide students with a break while also giving them an opportunity to practice their language skills. By incorporating games into English learning, it helps convey meaning more effectively and allows students to grasp the lesson more easily. Games are an effective way to prevent boredom during the lessons and play an important role in foreign language teaching. Incorporating games into lessons benefits both students and teachers. Moreover, using games, particularly for vocabulary instruction, can help teachers meet all educational objectives.

Wright et.al (2006:1) state that “game is an activity which entertaining and engaging, often challenging, and an activity in which the learners play and usually interact with others.

According to Huyen (2003) there are some advantages of games especially in teaching vocabulary: “First, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. Second, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. These create the motivation for learners of English to get involved and participate actively in the learning activities. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way.” Games are highly beneficial for learners during their English lessons. They make learning English more engaging and can encourage students to think more openly. Even if students don't fully grasp the meaning of the game, they are motivated to figure out how to play it, ensuring that all students actively participate.

Games that can be used in teaching vocabulary:

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“Memory Challenge” is a great game for teaching vocabulary. In this activity, students sit in pairs or small groups and are given three minutes to list as many words as they can recall from a previous lesson.

“Pictionary” is another example of a fun and interactive game that can be used to teach vocabulary to learners. In this activity, the class is divided into two teams, with each team sitting on opposite sides of the room. One student from each team is asked to come up to the board, where the teacher provides them with a word or phrase to illustrate as a clue. The team that successfully guesses the word first earns a point, making it a competitive and engaging way to reinforce vocabulary learning.

“Taboo” is a game in which students take turns describing a vocabulary word without using certain “taboo” words. This encourages creative thinking and deepens their understanding of the word's meaning.

“Word Mapping”. Students create visual maps for vocabulary words, including definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences. They can then present their maps to the class.

“Role play” games involve participants taking on specific roles. While terms like role play, drama, and simulation are sometimes used interchangeably, they can be distinguished. Role play typically has students assume roles they don't experience in real life, such as a dentist, while simulations involve roles they either already hold or are likely to encounter, like a customer in a restaurant. Dramas are usually scripted performances, whereas in role plays and simulations, students generate their own dialogue, though preparation is often beneficial.

“Digital Flashcards”. Teachers can use apps like Quizlet to create flashcards with vocabulary words. Students can play matching games or quizzes on the platform, adding a tech-savvy twist to traditional studying.

Games assist teachers in creating contexts where language use becomes practical and meaningful. Although games are frequently linked to entertainment, it's important not to overlook their educational significance, especially in the context of foreign language teaching and learning. They are effective tools because they boost motivation, reduce students' anxiety, and provide opportunities for authentic communication.

In conclusion, incorporating games into vocabulary teaching proves to be a powerful tool in enhancing language acquisition. Games not only make learning more enjoyable and less stressful, but they also foster a competitive and collaborative atmosphere that keeps students engaged. Through activities like “Memory Challenge,” “Pictionary,” and “Taboo,” learners are encouraged to think creatively, apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts, and work together to solve language-based challenges. Moreover, by integrating digital tools such as flashcards, teachers can further diversify their instructional strategies, appealing to a tech-savvy generation of learners. Ultimately, using games in vocabulary lessons promotes active participation, reinforces retention, and transforms the classroom into a dynamic learning environment where students can build both confidence and competence in their English language skills.

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